

## THE AESTHETIC OF PAMOR LUKIS KERIS PONDOK SENI MAYAPADA IN PAMEKASAN

*Oktoberia Sakti Maharani*

Pendidikan Seni Budaya, Pascasarjana, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

Email: [oktoberia.20011@mhs.unesa.ac.id](mailto:oktoberia.20011@mhs.unesa.ac.id)

*I Nengah Mariasa*

Pendidikan Seni Budaya, Pascasarjana, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

Email: [mariasa@unesa.ac.id](mailto:mariasa@unesa.ac.id)

### ABSTRACT

Pondok Seni Mayapada is a hermitage in Pamekasan Madura where the community has an activity of making keris. In this place, they produce a special and aesthetic keris through the method of painting. The keris is painted using fire medium. The results are very unique and interesting. The fire keris painting come up in various forms and designs such as paintings of flowers, paintings of fire, and paintings of leaves. Each painting has the same style because the basis of the painting uses fire, so the color result is only black and white.

**Keywords:** *Pamekasan, Keris, Painting, Fire, Aesthetics*

### INTRODUCTION

Since prehistoric times, the Java (those who live on the island of Java, Central Java and East Java, or those who come from these two regions) has animism that is belief in ancestor spirits who reside in objects, vegetation plants, animals, and also humans. These spirits are considered capable of having a good or bad impact on the human condition, even as a repellent for bad things. Such social beliefs are still believed by some Javanese people (Sutiyono, 2013, 1). The object that is considered as a place for ancestral spirits to live is a keris (Putri Fitria, 2014,178). *Keris* (ceremonial knife) is seen as a very important object because of its great savor, and is used by some aristocrats or common people (F.L. Winter, 2009,1). Javanese people believe that

*keris* can bring goodness, if a ritual offering is held to worship and honor the spirits who live in the *keris*. *Keris* care must go through special rituals with the aim of giving an appreciation to what the keris contains (Ragin, 2007.18) *Keris*, in the early development comes from the island of Java, in the 5th century or 6th (In this century, keris is still made in a simple form), that is why the keris is considered as a culture of Javanese (people who speak and use Javanese language and its various dialects in their daily life). The spread of the keris culture from the island of Java is thought to have occurred due to the expansion and existence of trade relations. The spread of keris on a large scale outside the island of Java, especially Sumatra, first occurred when the Singasari kingdom held a

pamalayu expedition in 1275 AD (13th century) (Bambang 2004, 33). Keris is an art object with high metallurgical technology that is complex, full of artistic touches and works of artistic quality that have high aesthetic value. Not everyone can imitate or inherit it because every era has certain manufacturing techniques accompanied by a mixture of raw materials, both iron, steel and pamor, which until now are still shrouded in secrets. Unless there is still a hereditary relationship or expertise in making a keris or solving the secrets contained therein by experimenting with the keris maker. It is not easy to produce keris with high artistic quality and high aesthetic value. Special rituals are needed, such as undergoing ascetic practice and various kinds of Javanese spiritual practice. Keris is the original culture of Indonesia, although in the 14th century the ancestors of the Indonesian people were generally Hindus and Buddhists, but no evidence has ever been found that the keris culture originated from India or other countries. This evidence is strengthened by several temples on the island of Java. Some of the temples on the island of Java were found with embossed images depicting the existence of a keris-shaped weapon, while in temples in India or other countries, such a form of weapon never existed (Purwadi et al., 2010, 241). People who have a high artistic taste will undoubtedly admire the keris as a valuable cultural relic (Bayu, 2010, 1). The UNESCO world institution (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) recognizes *keris* as one of the cultural heritages that must be preserved, to be precise on November 25, 2005. Keris in general has a flat physical shape, wide and elongated with sharp edges on the right and left, and the tip is tapered, so that the keris is included in the stabbing weapon group (MT.Arifin, 2006, 46). Madura is a part of the East Java region which has the unique characteristics of keris, even though the initial basis for making a keris is the same as making a keris in several places. Pondok Seni Mayapada is a hermitage in Pamekasan Madura that has the activity of

making keris, in a unique way, by painting the keris with fire, the results are shaped according to the wishes of the keris maker. Because of its uniqueness, the writer interested to examine this particular *keris* and write an article entitled *Aesthetics of Keris painting in Pondok Seni Mayapada Pamekasan*.

## DISCUSSION

### Keris Fire Painting in Pondok Seni Mayapada

Painting is a branch of fine art. On the basis of the same meaning, painting is a more complete development of the image. Painting is an activity of processing a two-dimensional medium or the surface of a three-dimensional object to get a certain impression. The medium of painting can be in any form, such as canvas, paper, boards, and the body can be considered as a medium for painting. The tools used can also be various, provided that they can give a certain imagination to the media used by the "Human Body".

According to KBBI (Indonesian Dictionary), the notion of art is a work created with extraordinary expertise, such as dance, painting, carving. Meanwhile, the meaning of painting is to make pictures using pencils, pens, brushes, and so on, whether with color or not. So the definition of painting is a work in the form of images created on the media of pencils, pens, brushes, and so on, and requires extraordinary expertise. *Lukis keris api* (Keris Painting in Fire) is an activity to make *keris* and paint the *keris* using the medium of fire to create the beauty and the aesthetic value of the *keris*. Keris is a traditional weapon that is often found in the archipelago. Since ancient times *keris* has had great significance, especially in the historical development of Indonesian culture. The keris weapon in the era of Majapahit and Mataram kingdom play a significant role for the existence of the kingdom. Bambang Hasrinuksmo and S. Lumintu (1988: 14) argue that *keris* is one of Indonesia's traditional stabbing weapons. Besides being spread throughout Indonesia, keris culture is also found in Malaysia,

Thailand, Philipina, Kamboja dan Brunai Darussalam. So it can be said that keris culture can be found in all the territory of the former kingdom of Majapahit. That is why, some cultural experts say that *keris* is the cultural heritage of the archipelago

Keris is classified into 'tosan aji'. *Tosan aji* is another name for various equipment made of iron which is highly respected, such as keris, sword, spear, and everything made of metal. As stated by Sumintarsih (1990: 32) that "Various weapons including stabbing weapons are commonly referred to as tosan aji (tosan = iron, aji = respect), so 'tosan aji' means the respected iron. Meanwhile, other experts stated that *tosan aji* is a Javanese term for all traditional weapons made of iron which are considered as heirlooms. This term is often translated in Indonesian as 'besi aji' or 'senjata pusaka' (heirloom weapon or traditional weapon). The literal meaning of *tosan aji* is precious iron or valuable iron. There are quite a lot of types of weapons classified as tosan aji, including *keris*, *tombak* (spears), *pedang* (swords), *anak panah* (arrows), *kujang*, *kudi*, *wedung*, *rencong* (Bambang Hasrinuksmo and S. Lumintu, 1988: 166).

In line with the development of the culture and social system, the function of *keris* also developed and changed. These changes are reflected for instance *keris* initially as a stabbing weapon, and can be used as a medium for the outpouring of aesthetic expression that serves as a weapons maker. Because its manufacture only contains secrecy and its prestige material uses meteorite material from outer space, then it is considered a sacred object that is always revered and respected.

Javanese people believe that keris is believed to have magical power. It is because in the process of making 'keris' the creator or keris-making master had to experience 'laku tapabrata'. Therefore, keris is rarely removed from its frame, and only removed for a very serious/urgent situation. Keris must be carried out with utmost care and respect. Furthermore, if a person want to possess

keris, then a ceremony need to be performed. Keris also functions as a complement to Javanese clothing and at that time keris is also an attribute of one's rank, as well as of wealth. A keris worn by a high official is usually equipped with decorations made of expensive materials (gold, ivory, silver and gems). Not everyone can wears 'keris'. In short, *keris* at that time was a symbol of status, which distinguished an official from an ordinary person.

### **The Aesthetic Pamor of Keris Painting Pondok Seni Mayapada**

The term aesthetics was first put forward by Alexander Blaugarten in 1750 to show the study of taste in the field of fine arts. The science of aesthetics is concerned with identifying and understanding factors that contribute to the perception of an object or process that is considered beautiful or that provides a pleasant experience. Etymologically, the word relates to everything that has to do with perception. Aesthetics is closely related to the visual assessment of the appearance of an object (Simonds, 1983; and Nassar, 1988).

According to Heath (1988), humans generally like beauty, people who judge their environment to be beautiful will maintain the sustainability of their environment at the initiative of each individual. One of the efforts made by humans is the protection of environmental quality. The existence of this protective attitude indicates that people really need the presence of a beautiful environment around them because it creates a comfortable and pleasant feeling for humans (Sekuler and Blake, 1994).

According to Nassar (1988), the aesthetic quality of a landscape can provide individual satisfaction and can indirectly influence human behavior. The created individual behavior can improve a rural quality, of course, by inviting other individuals to participate in improving aesthetic quality. Aesthetics is often associated with beauty, while beautiful is something that is felt to have a harmonious relationship from all parts

in terms of an object, space, and activity (Simonds, 1983). Landscapes with good visual quality are influenced by the composition between hard elements and soft elements which are harmonious as the main elements forming the landscape (Suryandari, 2000).

Assessment of the aesthetic quality of the environment is a suitable tool in observing natural and non-natural landscapes. Even though it is an inedible natural resource, the aesthetic quality can provide mental satisfaction for humans. Fulfillment of aesthetic satisfaction is the pinnacle of human needs because basically humans not only need physical satisfaction, but the main thing is satisfaction with the soul 'The beauty of the environment as a means of fulfilling aesthetic needs needs to be studied and research methods are made so that the environment can be managed properly so that its aesthetic quality can be protected and maintained (Daniel and Boster, 1976; and Foster, 1982). According to Daniel and Boster (1976), aesthetics is a partial definition by character and dependence on the environment which is the largest part of human consideration.

The prestige of the keris blade, occurs on the lines and textures that are silvery white and shiny. Therefore, this form is called by pamor or means prestige in English word. S. Wirahadidarsana and M.L.P Pusposukadgo (1985: 33) argued that "Pamor is an image or decoration found in keris blades and other tosan aji". Another case with the meaning expressed by Hamzuri (1984: 27) "Pamor is the pictures or paintings that are found on the blade of a keris".

From the two opinions above, it can be concluded that 'pamor' is a picture or painting found on the keris blade that has silvery color and emits a shiny light. *Pamor* plays a significant part of the keris because it has enormous magical power and affects the life of the owner. In addition, *pamor* has its own unique form and possess Javanese spiritual meaning, among others are:

1) Ngulit Semangka

the form of the 'pamor' resembles a watermelon rind. It is classified as *pamor tiban*, i.e. pamor that has been designed in advance by the master. It is believed that this pamor will improve one's social life. This form of 'pamor' is acceptable for everyone.

2) Beras Wutah Bentuk:

the form of this 'pamor' is circle with irregular lines that has layers pread over the entire surface of the blade. *Pamor beras wutah* is classified as *pamor tiban*. Its spiritual meaning is to bring harmony in the family. This pamor is suitable for everyone.

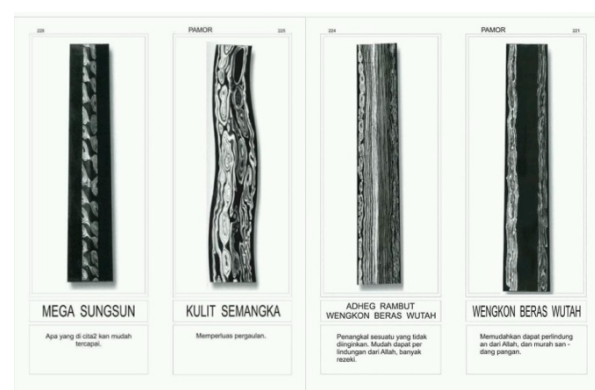
3) Udan Mas Bentuk :

The form of this 'pamor' is small spheres scattered on the surface of the keris blade. Spiritual meaning: to provide a life that is easy for the owner and have a wealthy life.

4) Ron Genduru

The form looks like daun genduru (genduru leaf).

The aesthetics of *Pamor Lukis Keris Dalam Api* in Pondok Seni Mayapada is the beauty of a keris painting that uses the medium of fire Here are the results of the Mayapada keris painting :





**Gambar 1.** Keris Mayapada Painting

In the beginning, keris was created in a simple form, no different from a dagger, straight without twists, some findings in the dagger from the Vietnamese Dongson culture are similar to the Buddhist keris or ancient keris. In Indonesia, the legend of keris is Empu Gandring keris (keris which is made by Empu Gandring) which was used by Ken Arok to kill its own master Empu Gandring. In terms of shape/form, keris is divided into two major groups: the straight keris and keris with winding blades. In order to get traditional keris there are certain criteria need to be accomplished: wutuh, sepuh and tangguh. What is meant by these criteria is that the condition of the keris must be fully visible with no defects, be it blades, iron pamor pattern, steel and accessories. Bambang Hasrinuksmo dan S. Lumintu (1988: 14) berpendapat bahwa: Keris adalah salah satu senjata tikam tradisional Indonesia. Selain tersebar diseluruh wilayah Indonesia, budaya keris juga ditemui di negara-negara Malaysia, Thailand, Philipina, Kamboja dan Brunai Darussalam. Jadi boleh, dikatakan budaya keris dapat dijumpai di semua daerah bekas wilayah kekuasaan kerajaan Majapahit. Itulah sebabnya, beberapa ahli budaya menyebutkan keris adalah budaya Nusantara.

The aesthetic value of a keris is determined by how many times the folding and forging process is repeated (saton). The more folds you do, the softer the pamor will be. After the repetition process, the alloy bars (metal alloys) are cut to the same length and a piece of steel is inserted. The three layers of

metal were again forged to become a crude keris. This raw keris is then further shaped by filing it and giving it a kind of arsenic (warangan) to strengthen the pamor style. At this stage, carved ornaments (ricikan) are made as an aesthetic enhancer as well as a message of certain meaning. After achieving the perfect shape, the keris is given a gaman (hilt) and a cover (sarung) so that it becomes a perfect keris. To maintain its beauty, keris is given fragrance and warangan oil regularly. A good keris exudes a distinctive beauty because of its various shapes and mixed metal materials, the keris has shown that the manufacturing procedure requires high technical mastery. Not just anyone can take over the roles and duties of this valuable object. The artistic value of keris can be seen from its various forms and the time period. Keris can be age thousands of years which is reflected in the unique beauty of this heirloom. For some people in Pamekasan, heirloom or keris is seen as an object that has its own elements and advantages, both from a cultural, aesthetic and mystical perspective.

The aesthetic value of keris made by pondok seni mayapada is known because of its delicate pamor, its unique forms, and its philosophy. The straight form of keris represent sincerity and the whole-heart to the Almighty God. The beautiful design and pamor in this keris also portrait the symbol of intellectuality and intelligency which serves as a guidance in life (sipat kandel).

The prestige of the keris blade, occurs on the lines and textures that are silvery white and shiny. Therefore, this form is called by pamor or means prestige in English word. S. Wirahadidarsana and M.L.P Pusposukadgo (1985: 33) argued that "Pamor is an image or decoration found in keris blades and other tosan aji". Another case with the meaning expressed by Hamzuri (1984: 27) "Pamor is the pictures or paintings that are found on the blade of a keris". From the two opinions above, it can be concluded that 'pamor' is a picture or painting found on the keris blade that has silvery color and emits a shiny light.

Keris from Madura pamekasan has its own characteristics, not only the style of the blade appearance but also the style of the frame. In addition,

Madura Island has the longest history of the keris production compared to other places in Indonesia. Therefore, the aesthetic value of Madura *keris* is quite strong both to the person who wears it or to the person who observes it. For the one who possess the keris he feels confident in living the life, while for the one who see the keris he will capture the beauty and the aesthetic value of the keris. the observers will feel a special aura when they see the person who own keris. Through the times the value and meaning of keris are also changed. However, we need to protect keris as a great masterpiece and as an honor to the old generations.

Keris is often associated with mystical things by ancient people. Furthermore, many people believe that keris has a magical spirit and supernatural powers which was passed down by the master who made it. Some people of Pamekasan believe that keris must be taking care in a special treatment to maintain its physical strength and to prevent rust stain. They also see keris as a spiritual heritage. Therefore, until now the tradition of taking care keris is still performed well in Madura. There is a ceremony in the first of muharram to take care keris with special ritual and pray toward the keris maker.

## CONCLUSION

*Lukis Keris dalam Api Pondok Seni Mayapada* in Pamekasan has its unique characteristics that give the aesthetics in the paintings, the unique thing is that these paintings are made with fire media, the results are very interesting, such as paintings of flowers, paintings of fire, and paintings of leaves. Each painting has the same style because the basis of the painting uses fire, so the color result is only black and white. In conclusion, the various forms of pamor and the various types of patterns go through a long process to create various kinds of pamor

patterns in folds of iron and steel and this what later determines the quality of *keris*.

Keris is a work of art that has a very high aesthetic value. in accordance with the progress of the times and the demands of the people who support the keris culture. In line with the development of the culture and social system, the function of *keris* also developed and changed. These changes are reflected for instance *keris* initially as a stabbing weapon, and can be used as a medium for the outpouring of aesthetic expression that serves as a weapons maker. Because its manufacture only contains secrecy and its prestige material uses meteorite material from outer space, then it is considered a sacred object that is always revered and respected. Keris also functions as a symbol and social status in society. Keris used as a sign of certain services and ranks. Keris is a complement to Javanese clothing and attribute of one's rank, as well as of wealth.

Nowadays many art collectors really like keris and want to own it. However, the price is very expensive as it needs a special technique and ritual to make keris. Therefore, various efforts need to be taken to prevent keris extinction and to protect the art of making keris.

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